

RECITATION OF THE CLAIMS

The following is a complete list of all claims in this application.

1-27. (Cancelled)

28. (Previously Presented) A system for consummating, managing, and retrieving at least one digitally signed, legally binding contract between a consumer of manufacturing services and at least one manufacturing vendor over a network, the system comprising:

a central controller for rendering a three-dimensional representation of an article design;

a transmitter for distributing the three-dimensional representation to the at least one manufacturing vendor over the network;

a receiver for receiving at least one digital signature; and

a processor capable of mapping the at least one digital signature to specific manufacturing instructions associated with at least one feature within the three-dimensional representation of the article design.

29. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 28, wherein the consumer of manufacturing services and the at least one manufacturing vendor are distinct and unrelated business entities, and

wherein a business relationship between the consumer and the at least one manufacturing vendor is defined through the at least one legally binding contract including the manufacturing instructions associated with the at least one feature of the three-dimensional representation of the article design.

30. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 28, wherein the at least one digital signature is applied by a representative of the at least one manufacturing vendor.

31. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 30, wherein the digital signature of the representative is applied to only the manufacturing instructions for which the representative has authorization.

32. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 30, wherein the at least one representative of the manufacturing vendor is qualified to evaluate compliance and the at least one digital signature is applied to the manufacturing instructions to ensure compliance with the manufacturing instructions; and

wherein the at least one digital signature is included in said legally binding contract.

33. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 28, wherein the at least one digital signature is applied by at least one representative of the consumer of the manufacturing services for the purpose of ensuring the accuracy of the manufacturing instructions, and where the at least one digital signature is included in the at least one legally binding contract.

34. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 33, wherein the at least one representative of the consumer is qualified to evaluate compliance and is responsible for verifying compliance with manufacturing instructions.

35. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 33, further comprising a central data store containing the at least one digital signature, where the at least one digital signature is associated with the manufacturing instructions associated with particular features within the three-dimensional representation of the article design.

36. (Cancelled)

37. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 28, further comprising a central data store containing the at least one digital signature, where the at least one digital signature is associated with the manufacturing instructions associated with particular features within the three-dimensional representation of the article design.

38. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 28, further comprising a central data store containing the three-dimensional representation of the article design, the specific manufacturing instructions associated with the article design, and the at least one digital signature.

39. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 28, further comprising a software module for managing the distribution of the three-dimensional representation of the article design and associated manufacturing instructions to the at least one manufacturing vendor over the network.

40. (Cancelled)

41. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 28, wherein said processor further validates and secures the at least one digital signature as legally valid and enforceable.

42. (Previously Presented) A process for consummating, managing, and retrieving at least one digitally signed, legally binding contract between a consumer of manufacturing services and at least one manufacturing vendor over a network, the process comprising the steps of:

distributing a three-dimensional representation of an article design to the at least one manufacturing vendor over the network;

receiving at least one digital signature; and

mapping the at least one digital signature to specific manufacturing instructions associated with at least one feature within the three-dimensional representation of the article design.

43. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 42, wherein the consumer of manufacturing services and the at least one manufacturing vendor are distinct and unrelated business entities, and

wherein a business relationship between the consumer and the at least one manufacturing vendor is defined through at least one legally binding contract including the manufacturing instructions associated with the at least one feature of the three dimensional representation of the article design.

44. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 42, wherein the at least one digital signature is applied by a representative of the at least one manufacturing vendor.

45. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 44, wherein the digital signature of the representative is applied to only the manufacturing instructions for which the representative has authorization.

46. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 44, wherein the at least one representative of the manufacturing vendor is qualified to evaluate compliance and the at least one vendor digital signature is applied to the manufacturing instructions to ensure compliance with the manufacturing instructions; and

wherein the at least one digital signature is included in the at least one legally binding contract.

47. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 42, wherein the at least one digital signature is applied by at least one representative of the consumer of the manufacturing services for the purpose of ensuring the accuracy of the manufacturing instructions, and where the at least one consumer digital signature is included in the at least one legally binding contract.

48. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 47, wherein the at least one representative of the consumer is qualified to evaluate compliance and is responsible for verifying compliance with the manufacturing instructions.

49. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 47, further comprising the step of storing the at least one digital signature, where the at least one digital signature is associated with the manufacturing instructions associated with particular features within the three-dimensional representation of the article design.

50. (Cancelled)

51. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 42, where the at least one manufacturing vendor comprises a plurality of manufacturing vendors, and

further comprising the step of managing the distribution of the three-dimensional representation of the article design and associated manufacturing instructions to the plurality of manufacturing vendors.

52. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 42, further comprising the step of storing the three-dimensional representation of the article design, the specific manufacturing instructions associated with the article design, and the at least one digital signature.

53. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 47, further comprising the step of storing the at least one digital signature, where the at least one digital signature is associated with the manufacturing instructions associated with particular features within the three-dimensional representation of the article design.

54. (Cancelled)

55. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 42 further comprising the steps of validating and securing the at least one digital signature as legally valid and enforceable.

56. (Previously Presented) A system for consummating, managing, and retrieving at least one digitally signed, legally binding contract between a consumer of manufacturing services and at least one manufacturing vendor over a network, the process comprising the steps of:

means for distributing a three-dimensional representation of an article design to the at least one manufacturing vendor over the network;

means for receiving at least one digital signature; and

means for mapping the at least one digital signature to specific manufacturing instructions associated with at least one feature within the three-dimensional representation of the article design.